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Framing Academic Leadership Positioning For The Global University

Kamaruzaman Jusoff

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1.0 Introduction

“Putting the right person at the right place at the right time” may be an old adage. However, for an organization to sustain on, the statement may remain significant and relevant. When deciding the leadership to play its role and to execute its function effectively and efficiently, this maxim remains a tag line to help make the organization, particularly educational institutions, to move towards the right track. Hence, the notion of leadership and its positioning in higher education arena refers not only to the strategic moves and tracks in meeting the unceasing demand for and a great diversification in this level of education system (UNESCO, 1998), but also the locality of internal and external leadership positioning that enhances growth and sustainability of the institution (Morshidi, 2009).

In this stewardship role too, the adage helps to ensure that people are evolving rapidly into a post-industrial and knowledge-based society (Ansary, 2009). Nevertheless, to begin with, towards the end of the 20th century there were about 30 000 research articles, magazine articles and books have been written about leadership (Abu Daud, 2009) but the only test of leadership is that somebody follows. Contemporary definitions of leadership often reserve the notion that leadership depends entirely on the leader’s capability, behaviour, style and charisma. Joseph Rost (1993) stated that the fundamentals of leadership involve the interaction of the people, regardless of the size of the organization. It is not the work of a single person. Rather leadership that works can be defined as a collaborative commitment among group members, which include the leaders, followers as well as those who are outside the constituencies. Further, he states that the essence of leadership is not the leader, but the relationship. By establishing the connection between the leaders and the followers then, the act of influencing others can come into place for the organization to work collectively.

2.0 What is Leadership Positioning?

Positioning is a term that seems to evoke many negative reactions. A quick scan of the Microsoft Word meanings perhaps explains some discomfort with the term. Positioning can be seen as strategically placing oneself in an advantageous position for battle, or to win a race or contest. This attitude to seeking promotion makes many people uncomfortable. Nevertheless, the language of leadership aspirants when discussing or reflecting on the selection process, is riddled with terms referring to contests, competition and game-play. Aspirants consistently refer to ‘winning’, ‘losing’, ‘players’, whilst other aspirants are ‘the competition’. They even have supporters, including coaches. Family members might even barrack for them. This attitude towards promotion sits uncomfortably with a mindset that sees a career as a vocation.

For it to be effective, leadership is not dependent on position and that is why leadership is an action not position. It is dependent on character and influence. A leadership position is one that requires many different skills. It is an activity that is complicated to measure, but the results of the team will determine the leader’s success. Some people think leadership is about power; however, power is not leadership. When you lead people you are actually helping people accomplish more and be all that they can be.

Some require a position before they possess influence, while others possess influence by virtue of personality, strength of character, social interaction with others, and other sometimes-difficult-to-define attributes. When you seek to position yourself as a leader you must have two critical elements, namely a clear objective and a strong leadership potential. A more useful view of positioning is to see it as being strategic about achieving career goals. Hence, it is knowing what you want and enacting a plan to achieve that goal.

An academician who is considering of taking on more senior leadership roles needs to engage in activities and reflections at two levels. At a personal level, they need to question what they want to do, that is defining (or refining) ambitions. Having defined this, they must ask themselves if they have what it takes to do that job. Leadership aspirants frequently complete this part of the process. It is the second aspect of the positioning process that is less frequently achieved. Aspirants need to follow-through by ascertaining what they need to do to gain this position or role and who they need to convince that they have what it takes (Gronn and Lacey, 2004).

The objective of positioning a leader can be in the form of a vision, like the corporate visions used by many CEOs, or the objective can be a defined purpose for seeking to influence another. In 2000, during the high road of Microsoft's success, Bill Gates wrote and published the book [Business @ the Speed of Thought: Succeeding in the Digital Economy](#). It is in this book that he wrote about four leadership tips. These include:

1) Taking two "retreats" every year

The author suggested that one leaves the office to develop long-range strategies through 'offline' retreats. It requires that leadership that transcends the tactical management and leads the strategic initiatives. A great way to refresh and refocus is to get out of the mold, so you can gain a different perspective on where things are heading.

2) Reading other topics of interest

"Read books on topics that don't pertain strictly to your business or industry. It's the best way to maintain a broad perspective." Leaders need to open up broad channels of input. They have to assess what other industries are doing as these may impact yours. Microsoft did not attain its level of success by forgetting about their customers were doing. Their customers were small and medium businesses in healthcare, government, finance, and some "mom and pop" shops. All these other industries are intertwined with all the rest of the world.

3) Identifying problems early

"Identify problems early by tracking "exceptions," such as sales figures that suddenly sag for a particular product. Jump on them right away." Know what to expect and you will find anomalies. Once you found an anomaly, you have found a potential problem worth exploring. But, all in all, you need metrics in place to track anything.

4) Stopping at the end of each day

"Stop at the end of each day to analyze how well you used it. If you wasted time on things you didn't need to do, eliminate them tomorrow." Just imagine how much more efficient and effective you will be!

Leadership potential is developed over a long period of time. You have to create a foundation for leadership by building yourself. One has to look into our own character, knowledge, wisdom, ability to determine, manage, adapt to change and the ability to communicate with others; both at individual level and in groups. Harold Geneen was a businessman who immigrated to the United States from England with his parents as an infant. During his career, he was the CEO of two major corporations – Raytheon and ITT. Quote about Leadership from Harold Geneen: “Leadership cannot really be taught. It can only be learned.” We think this quote may be a bit subject to critique, but in general we do agree that “leadership cannot really be taught.” Leaders can be developed and mentored, but learning leadership is the responsibility of the individuals themselves. Learning leadership does not come from a book since leadership is learned from practice and experience (Geneen & Brent, 1997; 1999).

One thing that all leaders have in common is a lifetime of experience. The younger the leader is the more immature their leadership potential. The more mature the leader is the stronger their leadership potential. However, do not judge a leader by his age. Barack Obama may be significantly younger than Hillary Clinton or John McCain, but he is not necessarily be said as an ineffective leader. He has been running a predominately successful campaign for the Democratic Party nomination for President against more experienced and more established candidates. His has inspired and influenced many potential constituents and he has definitely left his mark on US Presidential politics. A leader, like Barack Obama, who may be young or just younger than others, is a leader who gained significantly from his experience in a short period of time by emphasizing quality and not merely quantity. This may be attributed to intelligence, wisdom, or, perhaps, leadership potential. At any rate, the quality of a leader’s experience is demonstrated in their effectiveness as a leader. The quality of experience may compensate for the quantity of experience. To some, positioning oneself as a leader and expert in his own field may be tough. The power of positioning yourself as leader and in order to be perceived as a leader, you must be continually investing into your education.

3.0 Collaborative Strategies in Leadership Positioning

The position of this leader has to be a relational and dynamic process. Positioning has always been a concept used in marketing. More often the concept includes these three types:

Functional Positions: solve problems, provide benefits to others, get favorable perception by stakeholders ☐

Symbolic positions: Self-image enhancement, Ego identification, Belongingness and social meaningfulness, Affective fulfillment ☐

Experiential positions: Provide sensory stimulation, Provide cognitive stimulation ☐

Leadership positioning in higher education then requires the movement of leaders together with the academic and non-academic staff the organization towards its goals by improving the quality of interactions among the members. It is through this interaction that builds cohesiveness of the group and making resources available (Cartwright & Zander, 1968). Indirectly, it also builds in leadership character, since without maintaining integrity and trustworthiness, the capability to influence will disappear. In summarizing several definitions, leadership is the art of influencing and directing people in such a way that it will win their obedience, confidence, respect and loyal cooperation in achieving

common objectives.

Leadership is an act which focuses on what a leader does. It is in this normal circumstances that in most cases it is his responsibility of what he is trying to achieve. A leadership guru, John Maxwell, summarizes his definition as “leadership is influence — nothing more, nothing less”. A direction of such moves beyond the designation that defines a leader as it involves his ability to influence others. The reference includes those who would consider themselves followers, and those outside that circle.

Next is the term positioning. Though positioning is very much an element in business world as a provision in ‘marketing’, the concept can still hold true in any organization, either a profit or non-profit, such as, in an educational institution. In deriving lessons from the business field, positioning strategy involves making the educational organization set to see what the products and services read ‘students and curriculum’ it churns, and what value proposition it can offer apart from the service for the community it espouses (Watson and Wei, 2007). A truly global company, in particular an educational organization, does not only sell its products world-wide, but it also operates the full spectrum of its corporate activities in several countries around the world with varying economies. Some of these related activities include initiatives such as training, hiring, research and development, offices and centers for social activities, sourcing, customization, manufacturing and assembly.

Ansary (2009) in his discussion on leadership positioning, shares models that are commonly defined in the business organization. With reference to Figure 1, the models indicate organisational characteristics comprising multinational, global and transnational. Each projects configurations of assets and capabilities beyond the ordinary scope which indicate autonomous operation in promoting organisational effectiveness.

A Variety of Models for Global Positioning			
Organisational Characteristics	Multinational	Global	Transnational
Configuration of Assets and Capabilities	Decentralized and nationally self-sufficient (Unilever, Philips)	Centralised and globally scaled, but trending to decentralized model (automakers)	Dispersed, Interdependent and specialized (Matsushita, Siemens)
Roles of overseas operation	Sensing and exploiting local opportunities	Implementing parent company strategies	Differentiated contributions by national units to integrated world wide operations

Figure 1. Models for Organisational Global Positioning (Ansary, 2009)

On the eve of a new century, there is an unprecedented demand for and a great diversification in higher education. This is coupled by an increased awareness of its vital importance for socio-cultural and economic development. This was an excerpt of the Preamble of UNESCO, 'World Declaration on Higher Education' of 9 October 1998. This is further concurred by a statement of the WTO Secretariat for the Council for Trade in Services S/C/W/49(1998), para.34:

"The growth in internationally-traded education services is likely to have a profound impact on the higher education system of some countries and the economics of education."

Regardless of the borders of geographical divide, the world of higher education is evolving rapidly to a post-industrial and knowledge-based society. It is clear that a transition is occurring in which intellectual capital or the brain power is replacing financial and physical capital as the key to strength, prosperity and well-being of the community. As Man enters what is now commonly called the Age of Knowledge, knowledge has become the key strategic resource necessary for prosperity is knowledge – educated people and their ideas .

In this pursuit for knowledge, Bohm (2003) projected the global higher education market at a total number of worldwide tertiary enrolment at 40% higher than seven years ago. The market passed the 100 millionth in 2004 and it is now rushing towards the 125 million students by 2020. UNESCO says there were 2.5 million students studying in a country other than their own in 2004. Global demand for international higher education is set to exceed 7 million students by 2025 which represents over four times the global demand in 2000. The statistics has also indicated the emerging market sprucing from Asia being the greatest growth potential and is expected to account for 70% of global demand in 2025. In addition, within Asia, India and China, they are the main growth markets and are estimated to account for 50% of the global demand for international higher education in 2025.

Malaysia being an emerging contender in international higher education market has provided the attractive infrastructure for the international market to consider the country as the most competitive choice, particularly from the near region and the Middle. Some of these pull factors that attract are well regulated higher education system, well-priced tuition fees, low living costs, and quality education. Inevitably too, pluralist culture, cultural similarities and geographic location, are pull factors that will attract the learners' multilingual provision (especially for non-English speaking students). The country is politically stable and safe, accompanied by good infrastructure and student support. Most of these learners are people for whom higher education was previously an unattainable aspiration. They see higher education as passport to improve their livelihood. These are also the group that will be the life long learners.

The domain of leadership positioning relates to the structuring of a global university which is a "...university that engages in worldwide competition for students, faculty and funding, and operates in a transnational setting that transcends the traditional understanding of domestic political framework, local cultural-linguistic elements and boundaries of countries" (Wan et al, 2008). They have listed eight characteristics that establish a global university.

- (i) Global Mission: its mission transcends the boundaries of the nation-state by the inclusion of the global perspective
- (ii) Knowledge Production: marshalling the huge intellectual and logistical resources to address global

problems and questions in new ways.

- (iii) New Roles of Faculty Professors: expected to publish research and teach, provide service and utilise their knowledge for the benefit of mankind
- (iv) Diversified Funding: beyond government support and student contributions to include corporations and private donors, competitive grants for technology innovation and the creation of for-profit businesses as spin-off research enterprises.
- (v) Multi-sector Linkages: Strong working relationships between universities, governments, businesses, corporations, industries and societies to enhance knowledge creation that lead to sustainable development.
- (vi) Worldwide Recruitment: Adopting worldwide recruitment strategies for students, faculty and administrators,
- (vii) Complex University: comprehensive and expanded encompass interdisciplinary researches and the allocation of resources; and concurrently include accountability and transparency
- (viii) Global Collaboration: The university seeks to be an active partner with international non-governmental and multi-governmental organisations in areas of collaborative research, mobility of students and faculty as well as the validation of international stature to the institution.

In addition, Pollard (2009) states that to work towards internationalization, one of the challenges faced by the University is building a university culture through formation of community of scholars in pursuit for teaching-learning excellence. Besides, academia should develop strong sense of independence amongst its academic community and the use of collegial consultation process. A collegial mindset is vital as it encourages staff participation and contributions in the decision-making process.

Adapting the business scenario, the models for global positioning in the external grounding involves organizational characteristics of three modes which are multinational, global and transnational. These models are of national and international interests in which for multinational, decentralization and nationally self-sufficient are complemented by the role of oversea operation which requires sensing and exploiting local opportunities. In the second model, the organisational character is under global model, configures within the centralised and globalised scaled which is actually inclined towards decentralizing model. However, in external operations, such an organisation implements parent company strategies. In the final model, transnational characterized that of dispersed, independent and specialized capabilities in its organization. Taking it in the international arena, this organization promotes differentiated contributions by national units to integrated worldwide operations.

5.0 Partnership to Build Leadership

Building leadership takes strategies and initiatives that should be delivered to those selected. However, for cautioning purpose, the trend that marks leadership development, nowadays, should consider programmes which deliver solutions and not just course programmes per se (Ting, 2009). In addition, the nation's ability to shape the world will depend on the quality of the leaders that is being shaped (Treverton and Bikson, 2003). In the United States, the agenda for positioning for tomorrow leadership to lead in a globalized world requires actions by all three sectors, plus higher education—

ideally in partnership (see table below). Some initiatives can have an effect in the short run, while others will require governmental action or reshaping organizations.

	Internationalizing the Current Leadership	Building Future Leaders
For government	<p>Increase use of Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA)</p> <p>Facilitate lateral movement from inside and out of government</p> <p>Improve hiring processes</p>	<p>Expand internship and cooperative programs Target fellowships</p> <p>Relax barriers to moving in and out of careers—e.g., conflict of interest laws</p>
For for-profits	<p>Heighten awareness of need for future leaders</p> <p>Improve hiring processes</p>	<p>Encourage dual (or treble)–expertise careers</p> <p>Support internationalized MBA programs</p>
For not-for-profits	<p>Support career exchanges across the three sectors</p> <p>Target programs for developing broad- gauged leaders</p>	<p>Increase funding for producing dual (and treble) expertise</p> <p>Increase support for leadership study and training</p>
For higher education	<p>Support real study abroad</p> <p>Increase initiatives for internationalizing education at home</p>	<p>Internationalize MA/MPP/PhD programs</p> <p>Internationalize MBA programs</p> <p>Redouble efforts to recruit talented minorities to international programs</p> <p>Rethink ways to internationalize the curriculum</p> <p>Accord leadership a serious place in teaching and research</p>

Figure 2. Partnership Strategy (Adapted from Treverton and Bikson, 2003)

6.0 Conclusion

To admit that Malaysian university education has yet to attain its global status needs a re-look. The criteria that define the institutions to be in this category have been achieved but needs more effort and commitment. It has to come from top down, particularly those in the helm of stewardship to bring the organization to a level higher than it has now attained. In internationalization effort, Malaysia has arrived almost. The academia has been striving to continuously learn. The stakeholders must never be left in the lurk as to what the higher education is taking them. Funding must continuously be strong. Most importantly, the political will from the highest end must continue to fire up so that the access and equity for higher education does not remain rhetorical but moves to ward pragmatics.

Finally, from Ansary (2009), in the words of Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), there is no more delicate matter to take in hand, nor more dangerous to conduct, nor more doubtful of success, than to step up as a leader in the introduction of change. For he who innovates will have for his enemies all those who are well off under the existing order of things, and only lukewarm support in those who might be better off under the new. In the winds of change, leadership positioning is a dynamic initiative to continuously grow and move with the need and demand of the environment, economically, socially and politically speaking.

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